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INFO GPM 03, SC 01, RSC 01, USIA 12, H 02, NSC 10, L 03, INR 07, P 04, CIA 04,
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EXCISE

10-21-67 Saigon 9171

R 210715Z OCT 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9288
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 4638
CINCPAC FOR POLAD
AMCONSUL DANANG 1166
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2819

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 9171

SUBJ: LOWER HOUSE ELECTIONS: PHU YEN

REF : SAIGON 7022

1. REFTEL REPORTED BASIC BIOGRAPHIC DATA ON THE 28 CANDIDATES WHO INITIALLY FILED FOR THE 2 LOWER HOUSE SEATS AT STAKE IN PHU YEN. TWENTY-ONE CANDIDATES REMAINED IN THE RACE AS OF OCTOBER 6. AT LEAST EIGHT CANDIDATES REPRESENTING VARIOUS GROUPS ARE CONSIDERED TO HAVE A CHANCE OF VICTORY.

(1)

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2. THE FOLLOWING FIVE CANDIDATES WERE DISQUALIFIED:

A. TRUYEN VAN NGUYEN, ARVN LT. AND MEMBER OF THE SINH TON DAI VIET PARTY, WAS NOT GRANTED LEAVE

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B. VO DON HOA, A MEMBER OF THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL AND FORMER CENSUS GRIEVANCE CHIEF, SUBMITTED HIS DEPOSIT LATE.

C. TRAN XUAN SANH, RESIDENCE CERTIFICATE NOT ISSUED FROM CONSTITUENCY FROM WHICH HE WAS RUNNING AS SPECIFIED IN ELECTION LAW.

D. NGUYEN THAI MACH, RESOURCES CONTROL POLICE OFFICER AND MEMBER OF VNQDD, SUBMITTED LEAVE CERTIFICATE FROM NATIONAL POLICE LATE.

E. NGUYEN NHIEN WAS ALLEGED TO BE A COMMUNIST SYMPATHIZER, APPEALED TO CENTRAL ELECTION COUNCIL AND LOST.

3. CANDIDATES VO TRUYEN AND HOANG TRONG NGHIA, BOTH MILITARY, WITHDREW AFTER SECOND POSTING.

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4. EXPECTATION IS THAT LOWER HOUSE ELECTIONS IN PHU YEN WILL BE HELD UNDER RELATIVELY PEACEFUL CONDITIONS, IN MARKED CONTRAST TO THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS WHICH CAME IN THE MIDST OF A 3 WEEK REGIMENTAL-SIZE NVA OFFENSIVE IN THE POPULOUS TUY HOA VALLEY AIMED AT DISRUPTING BOTH THE ELECTIONS AND THE PACIFICATION PROGRAM. TURNOUT FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WAS HIGH (87 PCT) DESPITE VC TERRORIST INCIDENTS, BUT IN THE FIERCE FIGHTING BEFORE AND AFTER THE ELECTION, 21 HAMLETS (12 WITH RD PROGRAMS) WERE OVERRUN AND THE RD TEAMS TEMPORARILY DRIVEN OUT. THE RD PROGRAM HAS BEEN SET BACK AN ESTIMATED 3 MONTHS. IN THE COURSE OF THE FIGHTING SEVERAL HAMLETS WERE LEVELED BY THE VC, ROK ARTILLERY OR US AIRSTRIKES. DURING SEPT. 3,700 HOMES IN TUY AN, TUY HOA, AND HIEU XUONG DISTRICTS WERE DESTROYED. THE US 173 AIRBORNE BRIGADE WHICH ARRIVED IN MID-SEPTEMBER TO ASSIST HARD-PRESSED AND OVER-EXTENDED ARVN AND ROK UNITS HAS SINCE CHASED THE NVA UNITS OUT OF THE RICH TUY HOA VALLEY. SECURITY, THOUGH STILL SHAKEY, IS MUCH IMPROVED SINCE LAST MONTH. CONSEQUENTLY, LOWER HOUSE CANDIDATES IN PHU YEN HAVE HIT HARD ON THE THEMES OF PROMPT AID TO REFUGEES AND RAPID AND

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FAIR COMPENSATION FOR WAR DAMAGE. TWO CANDIDATES, HUYNH DIEU AND NGUYEN DUC GIANG, HAVE BEEN LITERALLY CAMPAIGNING ON US BULGAR WHEAT, PROMISING TO SPEED UP DELIVERY TO REFUGEES.

5. THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTIONS IN PHU YEN IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT. BOTH CA DELEGATES, VO THUONG KINH AND LY VAN HIEP, DECLINED TO RUN. BOTH WERE UNSUCCESSFUL SENATE CANDIDATES. PROVINCIAL COUNCIL CHAIRMAN HUYNH DIEU, WHO SEVERAL MONTHS AGO WAS THOUGHT TO BE A SURE WINNER, MAY HAVE JEOPARDIZED HIS BUDDHIST SUPPZVRT AND CHANCES BY SERVING AS THE CAMPAIGN REPRESENTATIVE OF PRESIDENT-ELECT NGUYEN VAN THIEU. OTHER LEADING CANDIDATES ENJOY CONSIDERABLE BUT OFTEN NARROWLY BASED SUPPORT. MORUOVER, UNCERTAINTY OVER HOW PHU YEN'S VERY LARGE REFUGEE POPULATION (OVER 50,ØØØ) WILL VOTE CLOUDASTHE ELECTION PICTURE AS DOES THE UNKNOWN PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT OF THE NVA'S IMPRESSIVE SHOW OF FORCE IN AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER.

6. THE LEADING CANDIDATES.

A. THREE MONTHS AGO, BUDDHIST HUYNH DIEU SEEMED A SHOO-IN

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FOR A HOUSE SEAT. AS CHAIRMAN OF THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL AND DIRECTOR OF BO DE (BUDDHIST) HIGH SCHOOL HE ENJOYED THE RESPECT OF THE LARGE BUDDHIST ELEMENT. DIEU WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN ORGANIZING THE 1966 BUDDHIST "STRUGGLE MOVEMENT" IN PHU YEN AND IN SEPTEMBER OF LAST YEAR WITHDREW FROM THE CA RACE SACRIFICING PROBABLE VICTORY AT THE REQUEST OF THE LOCAL UBA HIERARCHY. YET BY ASSUMING THE POSITION OF PROVINCIAL CAMPAIGN REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE THIEU-KY TICKET, DIEU ALIENATED THE LOCAL UBA LEADERSHIP WHICH WOULD PROBABLY HAVE BACKED HIM FOR A LOWER HOUSE SEAT. (THE PHU YEN UBA CAME OUT STRONGLY IN FAVOR OF PHAN KHAC SUU AND WAS PARTLY RESPOSIBLE FOR SUU'S STRONG SHOWING IN PHU YEN. SUU POLLED 23 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, HIS BEST SHOWING IN II CORPS; THIEU ONLY RECEIVED 29 PERCENT, WHICH WAS HIS POOREST IN THE CORPS.) DIEU'S RAPPROCHEMENT WITH

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THE GVN BEGAN IN MARCH WHEN HE HELPED ORGANIZE THE GVN-SPONSORED ANTI-FALSE PEACE DEMONSTRATIONS IN PHU YEN. IN JUNE HE INDICATED [redacted] THAT HE WOULD SUPPORT NGUYEN CAO KY. HOWEVER, AS LATE AS AUGUST THE MORE MILITANT NATIONAL BUDDHIST LEADERS APPARENTLY STILL CONSIDERED DIEU WORTHY OF SUPPORT BY INCLUDING HIM ON

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THE STRONG BUDDHIST UPPER HOUSE LIST (LATER REJECTED) OF NGUYEN DUY TAI. INTERESTINGLY, DIEU'S REPORTED CONNECTION WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY PRIOR TO 1954 IS COMMONLY CITED BY MANY AS REASON TAI'S LIST WAS DISQUALIFIED. DIEU'S CANDIDACY IN THE LOWER HOUSE RACE WAS APPROVED BY THE LOCAL ELECTION COUNCIL [redacted] DESPITE FACT DIEU HAS APPARENTLY BEEN REPUDIATED BY LOCAL UBA LEADERSHIP HE STILL HAS A GOOD CHANCE. (AMONG HIS PROMINENT SUPPORTERS ARE THE PROVINCE CHIEF AND THE CENSUS GRIEVANCE CHIEF.) DIEU IS AT BEST A PRAGMATIST (SOME WOULD SAY OPPORTUNIST) BUT HE IS AN ASTUTE POLITICIAN AND IS VERY WELL KNOWN IN PHU YEN.
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